

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State regulator pleased toll carriers are offering same rates for in-state as interstate calls

OLYMPIA, Wash. – The state’s top telephone regulator today applauded the decision by two of the largest long-distance companies to include in-state calls in their highly advertised interstate calling plans.

Chairwoman Marilyn Showalter of the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) is pleased AT&T and Sprint are offering optional plans that let customers get the same low advertised rates for both in-state and out-of-state, long-distance calls.

“Customers express their confusion to us all the time in trying to figure out which company gives them the best deal for long-distance service,” said Showalter. “By clearing up this confusion, customers will know the cheaper rates apply to calls made across the Cascade mountains or to other states.”

Under the new long-distance calling plans offered by the two carriers, customers of Sprint and AT&T can request to add an in-state option for an additional \$3 a month to receive the lower per-minute rate.

“The in-state options now being offered by Sprint and AT&T will not suit every customer since they include an additional monthly fee,” said Showalter. “But AT&T and Sprint have now given customers a way to get their in-state calling at the lower, advertised rates.”

New Plans Giving Same Rates for Interstate and Intrastate Calls		
	Sprint	AT&T
7 a.m. to 7 p.m.	10 cents/minute	7 cents/minute
7 p.m. to 7 a.m.	5 cents/minute	7 cents/minute
Monthly Fee State-to-State calls	\$5.95	\$4.95
Monthly Fee In-state calls	\$3	\$3
Monthly Fee All toll calls	\$8.95	\$7.95



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Last fall, Showalter sent the three largest long-distance companies (AT&T, Sprint and MCI) a letter requesting the carriers either charge customers the same rate for in-state and out-of-state calls or make it more clear in their advertising that the lower rates did not apply to calls made within Washington. For example, at that time AT&T's "One Rate 7 cents" plan and Sprint's "Nickel Nights" plan actually cost Washington customers 10 cents a minute for in-state calls. Now, by paying a small monthly fee Washington consumers can pay the same 7 or 5 cents-a-minute for in-state calls.

The new plans are being offered and advertised nationwide. "We're gratified to see that our request on behalf of Washingtonians resulted in a national change in pricing practices by these two companies," added Showalter. "We hope other companies will feel the competition to modify their practices as well."

Showalter encouraged customers to review their long-distance phone bills carefully when considering choosing a plan or company in providing service. The WUTC offers a fact sheet on "How to select a long-distance provider." For a copy, call 1-800-562-6150 or visit the agency's consumer page website at www.wutc.wa.gov/consumer.

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